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FACT SHEET: ADULT ASTHMA & OTHER CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS IN NEW JERSEY

About asthma

- Asthma is a serious and chronic disease that is marked by swelling in the airways.
- Symptoms of asthma include shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing and chest tightness.
- Asthma symptoms can be triggered by tobacco smoke, dust, air pollution, cockroaches, rodents, pets, mold, smoke from burning wood or grass, allergies, illness, acid reflux, exercise, some medications, strong odors, pollen, weather conditions, some foods, and strong emotions.
- Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.
- Uncontrolled asthma can lead to missed work days, emergency department visits, hospitalization and even death.
- About 8.7% of New Jersey adults had asthma in 2010.

Asthma & other chronic conditions or risk factors

The table below compares New Jersey adults with asthma to New Jersey adults without an asthma history. It shows that adults with asthma are more likely than adults without an asthma history to have a wide range of other chronic health conditions and risk factors. Adults with asthma are about 23% to 603% more likely to have other chronic health conditions or risk factors. Additional health conditions may create barriers to physical or social activity, which can cause further declines in health status. Those who work with people who have asthma should be aware of the likelihood of other health issues and incorporate comprehensive management of all health problems or behaviors wherever possible to maximize health and quality of life.

Prevalence of Other Conditions or Risk Factors among New Jersey Adults with Current Asthma (2008-2010) Compared to Adults without an Asthma History			
Condition/Risk Factor	Percent of New Jersey Adults with Current Asthma who have Condition	Percent of New Jersey Adults without an Asthma History who have Condition	Increase in Prevalence of Condition among NJ Adults with Asthma
Diabetes	13.3%	8.3%	60%
Heart Disease	11.6%	6.9%	68%
Arthritis (2009 only)	32.9%	21.8%	51%
COPD (2011)	22.5%	3.2%	603%
Depression (2011)	21.4%	9.7%	120%
Obesity	33.9%	22.9%	48%
Smoking	17.8%	14.5%	23%

Sources: New Jersey Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2008-2010 (diabetes, heart disease, arthritis (2009 only), obesity, smoking); 2011 (COPD, depression).

Further explanation of differences in table—the difference in prevalence for the conditions/risk factors in the table can be stated as follows:

- Diabetes prevalence is about 60% higher among adults with asthma when compared to adults without an asthma history.
- Heart Disease prevalence is about 68% higher, arthritis prevalence is about 51% higher, COPD prevalence is about 603% higher, depression prevalence is about 120% higher, obesity prevalence is about 48% higher, and smoking prevalence is about 23% higher.

Further explanation of conditions/risk factors in the table:

- Asthma history includes ever being told one has asthma and current asthma includes those with an asthma history who report still having asthma.
- Diabetes does not include gestational, borderline or pre-diabetes.
- Heart disease includes a history of heart attack, stroke, angina or coronary artery disease.
- Arthritis includes “some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia” with additional notes that diagnoses include “rheumatism, polymyalgia rheumatic, osteoarthritis (not osteoporosis), tendonitis, bursitis, bunion, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome, tarsal tunnel syndrome, joint infection, Reiter’s syndrome, ankylosing spondylitis, spondylosis, rotator cuff syndrome, connective tissue disease, scleroderma, polymyositis, Raynaud’s syndrome, vasculitis (giant cell arteritis, Henoch-Schonlein purpura, Wegener’s granulomatosis, polyarteritis nodosa)”.
- COPD stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. COPD makes breathing difficult and tends to get worse over time.
- Depression includes ever being told one has a “depressive disorder (including depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression)”.
- Obesity is defined as having a body mass index of 30 or higher, based on the respondent’s recollection and self-report of height and weight.
- Smoking is defined as having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in a lifetime and currently smoking some days or every day.

Glossary:

Prevalence – Proportion of the population with a condition at a given point in time or over a specified period of time

Risk Factor – Factor that is associated with an increase in a disease, condition, or health outcome

For more information:

New Jersey Asthma Awareness and Education Program: www.nj.gov/health/asthma

New Jersey Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Services: www.nj.gov/health/fhs/chronic

Pediatric Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ): www.pacnj.org

References:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data, 2008-2011. <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/> (quotations above are from questionnaires—2009 for arthritis; 2011 for depression)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Common Asthma Triggers. Accessed October 19, 2012. <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/triggers.html>
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, What is COPD? June 8, 2012 <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/copd/>

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